

# FRENCH REVOLUTION (1789-1815)



# Questions

1. Explain how the foundations of the Modern World were laid by the American and French Revolutions-**UPSC 2019**



# Europe on the Eve of the French Revolution



# Synopsis

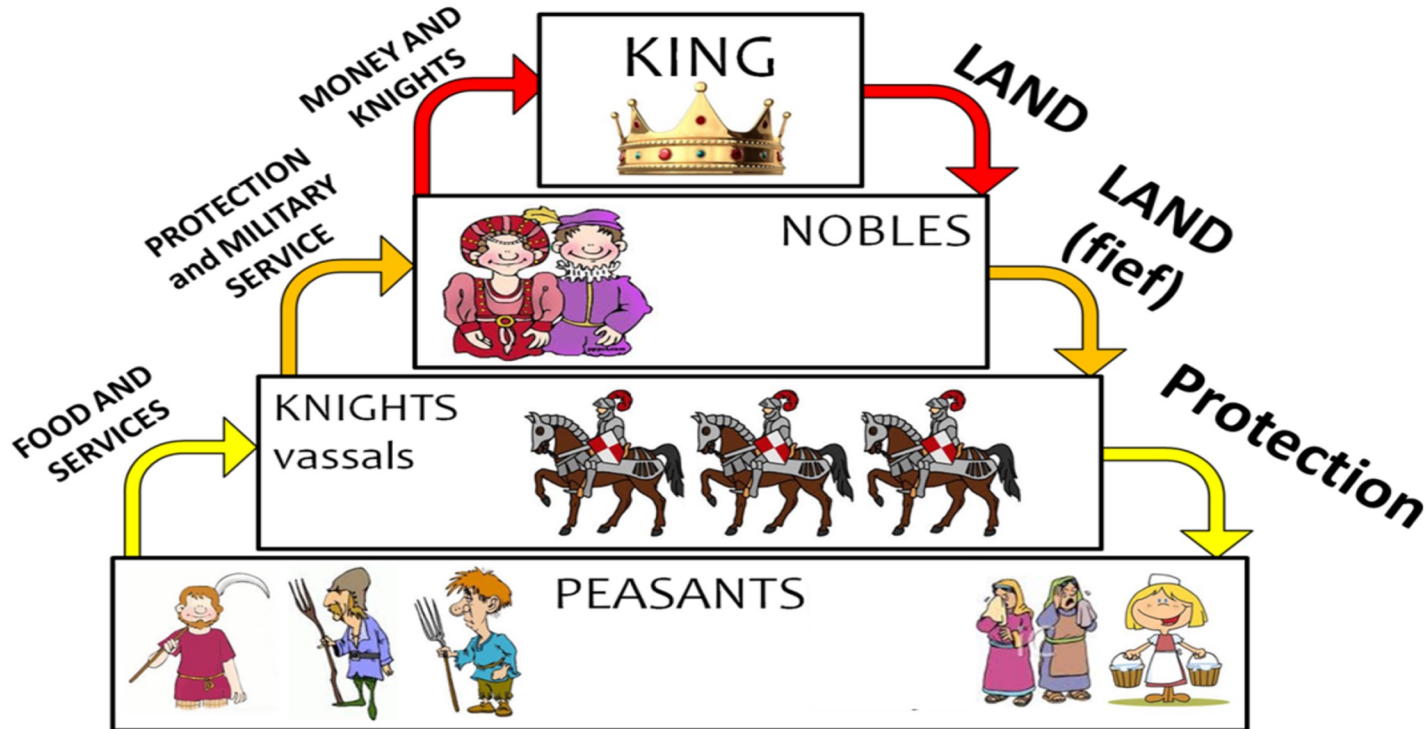
1. Introduction
2. Aims of the Revolution
3. Character and nature of the revolution
4. Causes for the outbreak of the Revolution:
5. Course of the Revolution
  - Period I: 1789-91 National Assembly
  - Period II: 1792-95 National Convention
6. Why the revolution broke out in France ?
7. Achievements of the Revolution-Internal & External



## □ Feudalism

- It denotes a **Politico-Socio-Economic system** of **rights and duties** based on **land tenure** and **personal relationships** in which land is held in **'fief'** (meaning property in land) by vassals from lords to whom they owe **specific service** and with whom they are bound by **personal loyalty**.
- It flourished in a **closed economy** wherein the **lords, vassals and serfs** play an important role.
- This system developed first in **Western Europe** in the medieval period and later in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world.

# European Feudalism



Feudal Pyramid of Power

- **Peasants (3)**

1. **Freeholders:** received lands; free; paid taxes

1. **Villeins:** owned lands (part produce, fixed days - lord)

1. **Serfs:** Free labour (bonded labour)-lord, Restrictions (2)



## □ Serfdom

- A member of the lowest feudal class, attached to the land owned by a lord and required to perform labour in return for certain legal or customary rights
- Much like indentured servitude

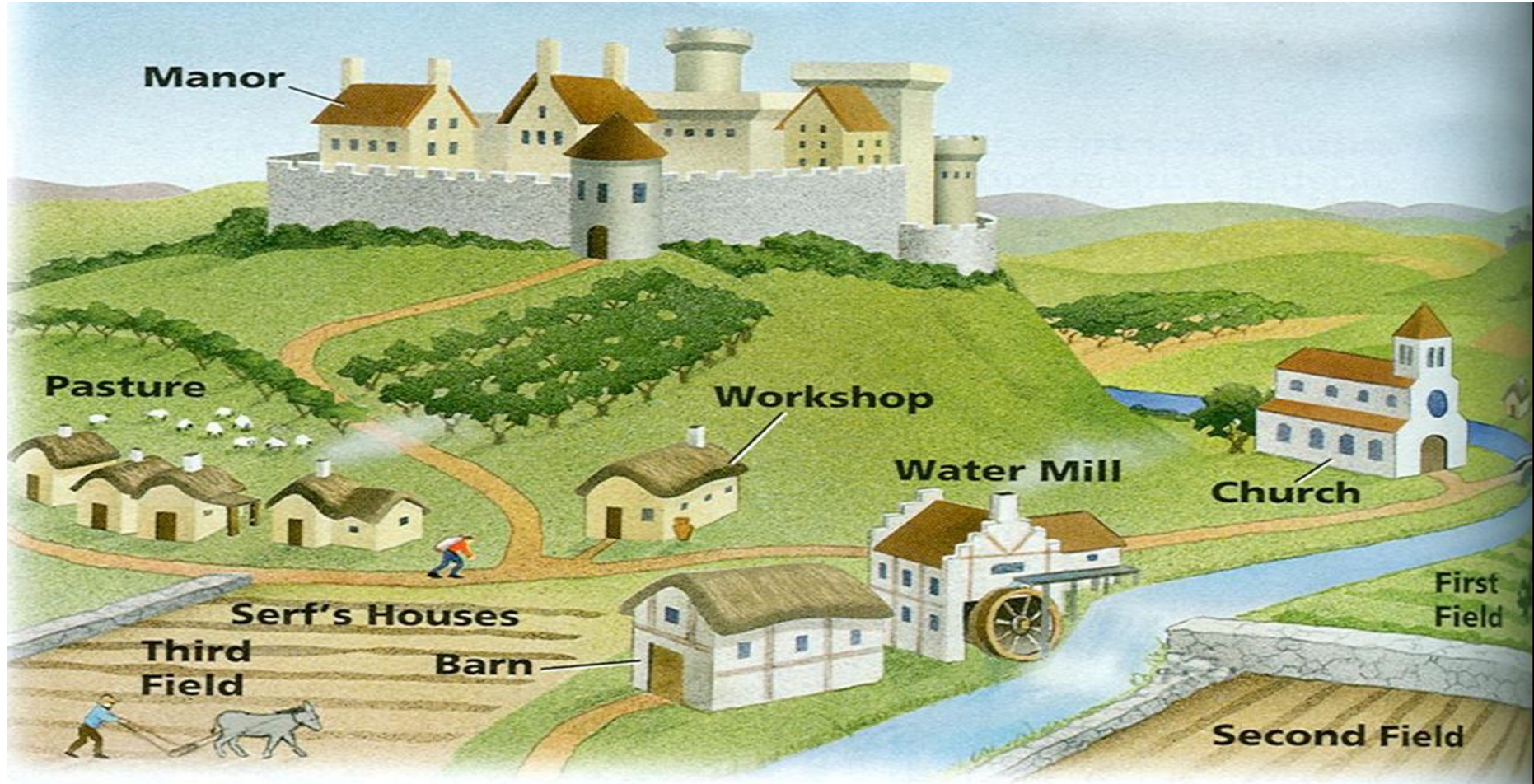


## ❑ Manorial or Seignorial System:

- Important feature of Feudalism
- Feudal lord all powerful within his fief > consist of 1 **manor** (**village farm**) or several manors
- **Rights & Duties:** Law and Order (**police**), taxes (**fiscal**), punishment (**judicial**), armed forces, castles, protecting tenants etc



# Manorial System





- **Guild System?**



# The Guild System

---

## **Masters**

Owned their own shop.

Trained apprentices.

Ran the guild.

## **Journeyman**

Worked for any master for wages.

Knew most of the skills of the trade.

Could become a master if he demonstrated great skill (masterpiece) and had enough money to afford guild fees and buy his own shop.

## **Apprentices**

Worked for a single master for housing and meals.

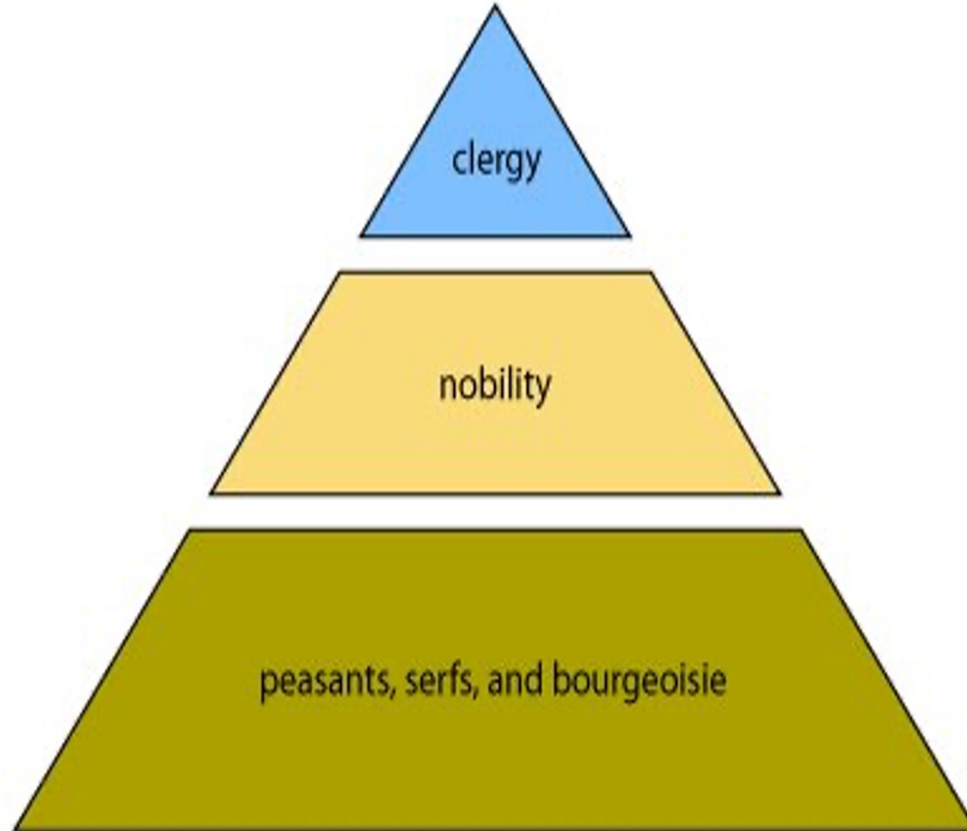
Learned the skills of the trade.

Was young, generally under 20.

Served a set time.

# French Society: Three Estates (Classes)

## The Feudal Pyramid





# Aims-French Revolution

1. Freedom of the press to guard against administrative abuses
2. Reform in criminal laws
3. Contract between the King and his people to safeguard personal freedom of citizens
4. All State Offices, military and ecclesiastical to be thrown open to all Frenchmen
5. Introduction of the concept of equitable distribution of the incidence of taxation
6. Asserted sanctity of private property

Destroy the 'Ancient Regime' and social inequalities

Establish a 'New Order' based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity

# ❑ Character & Nature of the French Revolution

- “One nation, One event & One man”
- “Mother of all Revolutions”
- **1789-94**: hungry masses in action; ended monarchy, feudalism, serfdom, privileges of the church; took revenge; defeated the trained armies
- The ragged, rugged, bare-footed and the **hungry masses** controlled the very **character and nature** of the Revolution and the so called **intellectuals** played the role of a **second fiddle**
- Violent, emotional, passionate, blood thirsty
- “If France gets cold, Europe sneezes”

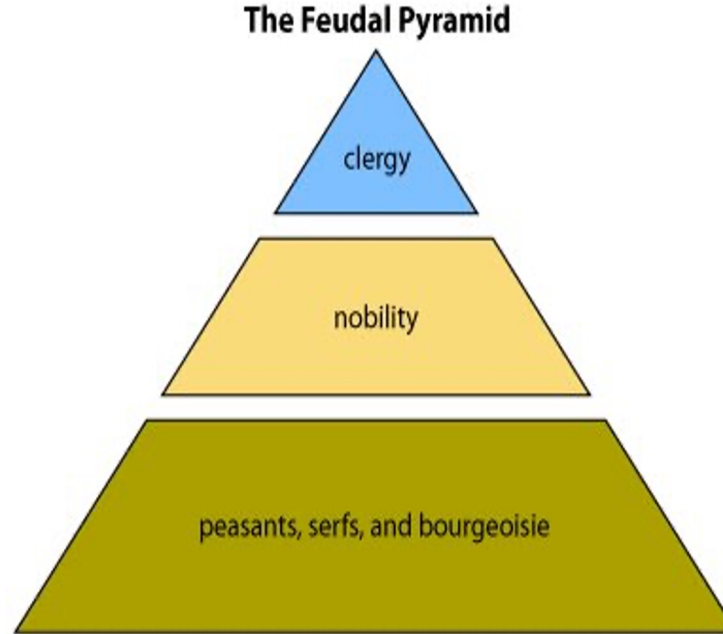
# Causes for the outbreak of the Revolution

## 1) SOCIAL FACTORS:

Privileged class>

Higher Clergy-**First Estate**

Nobles-**Second Estate**



Unprivileged class> Middle class(bourgeoisie),Peasants,  
Urban workers, lower nobility & lower clergy-**Third Estate**

- **“The Revolution of 1789 was much less a rebellion against despotism than a rebellion against inequality”.**
- **First Estate: Higher clergy:** 1.3 lakh/24 million
- Cardinals, Bishops, Arch-bishops etc
- Led a luxurious life without performing any duties towards the church
- Were **exempted from taxation**

- **Second Estate: Higher Nobility:** 1.5 lakh
- Owned palaces, lands, rentals, costly vestments; did not perform any duties; were **exempted from taxation.**
- **“The nobles fight, the clergy pray and the people pay”**

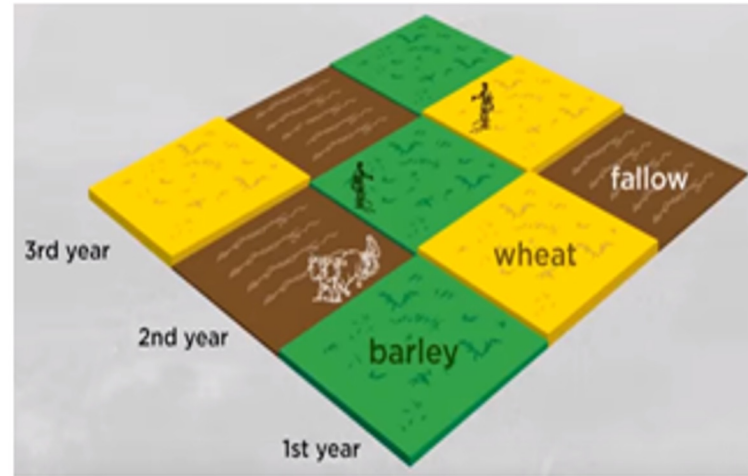


- **Third Estate: Middle class, Peasants, Urban workers, Lower nobility & Lower clergy**
  1. **Middle class:** Politicians, rich merchants, capitalists, intellectuals, professionals etc.
    - Widely travelled, affluent, educated, articulate. But were given 2<sup>nd</sup> category status; guild restrictions hampered free commercial activity.
    - They became the leaders of the revolution and the aims of this class became the aims of the revolution too.

## 2. Peasants:

- Backward methods of agriculture
- Shortage of land
- Over Population

## Medieval 3 field Crop Rotation System



- Large tracts of land left fallow, No full employment; crop rotation unknown, Peasants not allowed to plant according to their will;
- Nobles kept pets like deer, pigeon etc which grazed on the land of the peasant-was not to fence it or drive them away
- Nobles tried cases of peasants.
- Corn had to be ground in the mill owned by nobles
- Peasants had to pay various kinds of taxes

- i. **Tithes:** To the church- $1/5$  or  $1/15^{\text{th}}$  of the gross produce
- ii. **Taille:** Land tax, depended upon the produce and value of the land
- iii. **Income Tax:** 5% of the income
- iv. **Gabelle:** Salt Tax
- v. **Corvee:** Road tax



## Poor harvest



- “In France 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the population died of hunger and a tenth of it due to indigestion”
  - Inflation –discontentment
- 3. Urban workers:** Wage earners in **urban-based cottage and handicraft industries**; rising prices pinched them; lack of free trade and guild system impacted them adversely.
- 4. Lower Nobility and lower clergy:** Had to perform all the duties of the government and the church respectively.



## 2) **POLITICAL FACTORS:**

### **A. Centralized Despotism:**

- Henry IV, Louis XIII, Louis XIV-brought internal prosperity and external glory to France.
- After Louis XIV weak successors

### **B. Dismal administrative system**

### **C. Ambitious foreign policy followed by the Bourbon kings**

## B. Dismal Administrative system:

- Greedy, corrupt nobles
- Overlapping of departments.
- No uniform law
- Legal system-full of confusion; thick jungle of laws; laws written in Latin; cruel and unjust punishments, torture to extract confessions-**no proper criminal procedure**; Profusion of **law courts**.

- **Nobility of the Robe:** Anybody could become a judge for life by paying money, could also transfer it to his children.
- **Lettre de cachet** [French: “letter of the sign (or signet)”]:  
Letter signed by the king and countersigned by a SOS and used primarily to authorize someone's imprisonment. It could be purchased by the rich and influential from the court who used it often to get an innocent person arrested and imprisoned.
- No uniform **weights and measures & coinage**-impacted economy adversely.

## C. Ambitious foreign policy of Bourbon kings:

- **Louis XIV & Louis XV** involved France in a number of wars- War of Devolution, Dutch war, Polish war, War of the League of Augsburg, Spanish Succession war, Austrian Succession war, 7 years war, American War of Independence etc.
- No increase in territory of France, fought for selfish reasons and to appease their ego.
- Created economic crisis later.

- **American War of Independence** resulted in **republican ideas** percolating into France due to French participation; further principles such as **Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Rule of law and natural rights of man** influenced French men.

*(Marquiss de Lafayette, Marquiss de Choisy Comte d'Aboville, Comte de Rochambeau, Comte de Grasse etc)*

- The French involvement in the American War of Independence also exacerbated the financial condition of France (**1.3 billion livres** ) and pushed the state on the verge of bankruptcy and eventually the people to the path of Revolution.



**3) ECONOMIC FACTORS:** Tax system-unfair & oppressive,  
Economic bankruptcy

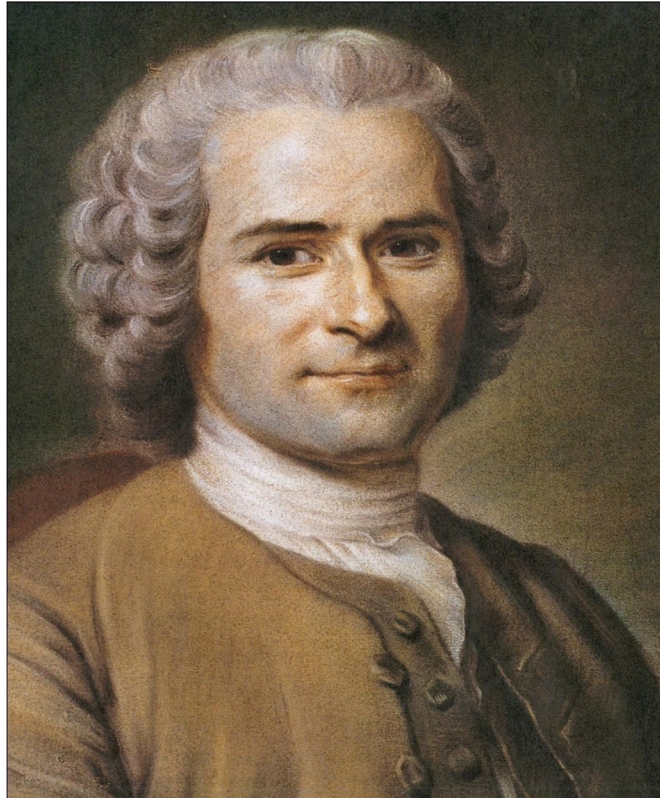
- **Unfair**-privileged classes exempted from taxes
- **Oppressive**-because of the '**Tax Farming system**'
- Bankruptcy of France-wars,tax exemption to privileged classes
- Privileged classes stalled financial reforms of Louis XVI

## 4) CONTRIBUTION OF FRENCH PHILOSOPHERS & PHYSIOCRATS

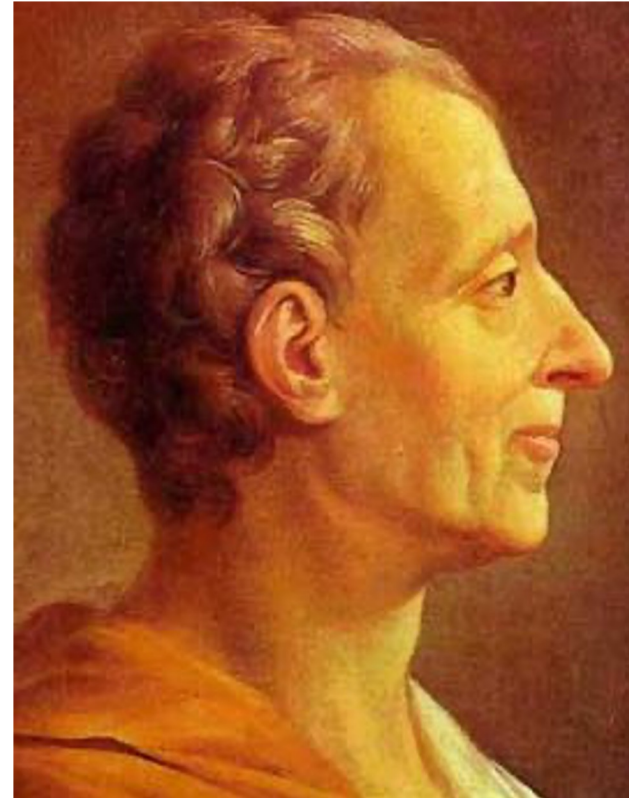
Voltaire



Rousseau



Montesquieu



## □ Philosophers-

- a) **Voltaire: Supremacy of Reason**; criticised the abuses which had crept into the church; believed in **Enlightened Despotism** (not autocratic monarchy)
- Preferred to be ruled by 1 Lion rather than by 100 rats
  - Frederic-Prussia, Catherine-Russia
- b) **Rousseau: “Social Contract”**; **Popular sovereignty**-people are supreme in a country.
- If Govt. doesn't care for their welfare they have a right to revolt against it and have a Govt. which will safeguard their interests.
  - He also advocated **civil freedom, social equality and the rights of man.**

c) **Montesquieu: 'The spirit of the laws'(1748)**-Separation of powers between the Legislature, Executive and Judicial branches-Even 2 out of the 3 in the hands of one person will lead to arbitrariness or misuse of powers.

☐ The Revolution was essentially a **response** and **reaction to the evils** prevailing in the French political, social, economic, administrative and religious life.

- The discontentment prevailing among the masses was a result of these evils and it was this long accumulated discontentment that burst out in 1789 in the form of a great revolution.
- The **role of philosophers** was that of a **catalyst**. Through their **writings and speeches**, they only highlighted the prevailing evils and thus played an **important but indirect role** in the outbreak of the revolution. In the absence of these evils, their writings and speeches would have fallen on deaf ears.

- The Revolution would have taken place in France even without these philosophers, if not in 1789, then at a later date. A **Revolution was inevitable in France** till the time there was **discontentment among the masses** as a result of their suffering at the hands of **political, social, economic and religious institutions**.
- ❑ **Physiocrats**: French economists; gave a twist to the existing theory of Mercantilism; Advocated that govt should not put any restrictions on trade and commerce; **believed in free trade** and that encouragement should be given to international trade;
- Wanted to break the monopoly of trade guilds by advocating free trade
- Gave **importance to agriculture** for the internal prosperity of the nation
- **Important Physiocrats**-Mirabeau, Turgot, Necker etc.



## 5) **Economic Crisis**

- Personal use of money
- Wars
- Exemption from taxation, Tax farming system, lack of free trade, shortage of land, backward methods of agriculture, over population.
- Loans from European powers

**Louis XVI (1774-1793)**



**Marie Antoinette**

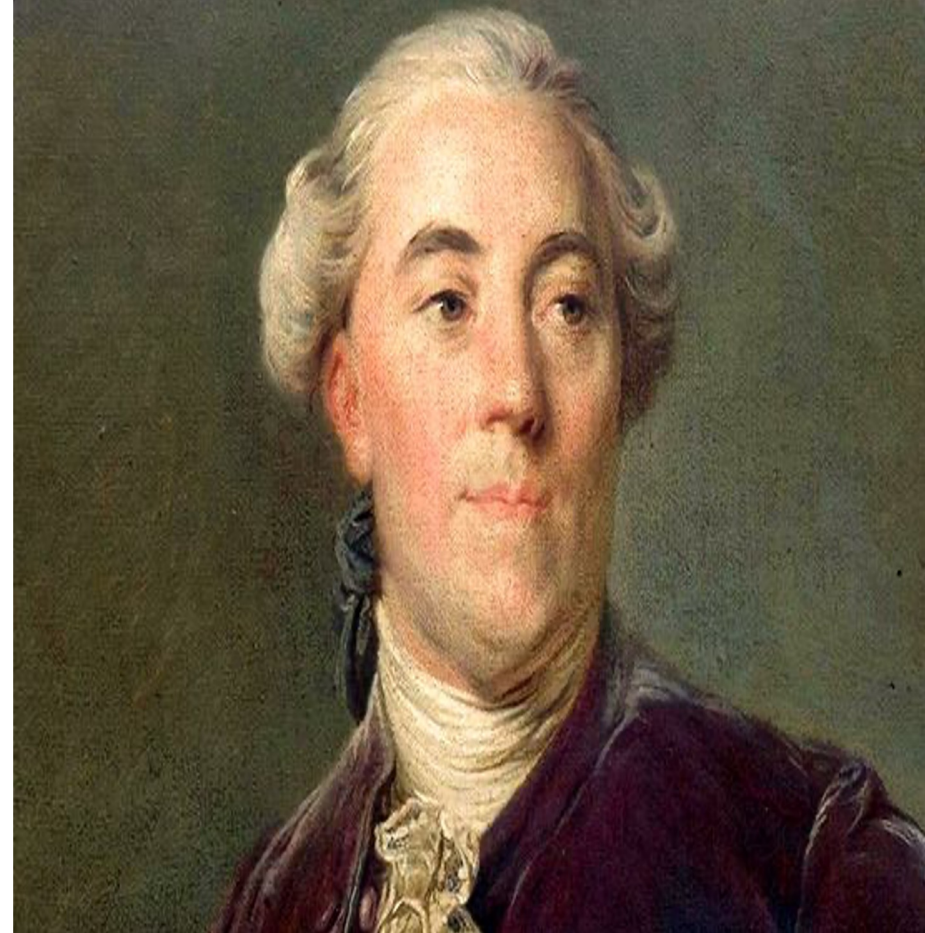




# Turgot



# Necker



- **Turgot:** Controller General of Finance -Recommended
  - i. Enforced **strict economy** and checked **useless expenditure**
  - ii. Abolished customs barriers, **introduced free trade**, checked trade guilds
  - iii. **Abolished tax farming**, fixed land tax
- **Necker**-Genevan banker;Recommended
  - i. **Abolished tax farming**
  - ii. **Report-annual income and expenditure of the state**

- **Calonne:** Recommended
  - i. Cut government spending
  - ii. Revival of free trade
  - iii. Sale of Church property
  - iv. Equalize salt and tobacco taxes and
  - v. Establish a universal land value tax.
- **Assembly of Notables** (clergy & nobles)-Estates General
- **Parliament of Paris**-foreign loans
- Estates General-**1614**



# Course of the Revolution

## Period 1:1789-91 National Assembly

Estates General(nature & composition);

Fall of Bastille and its impact;

**Work of the National Assembly:**

A. Administration

B. Financial Measures

C. Religious Measures

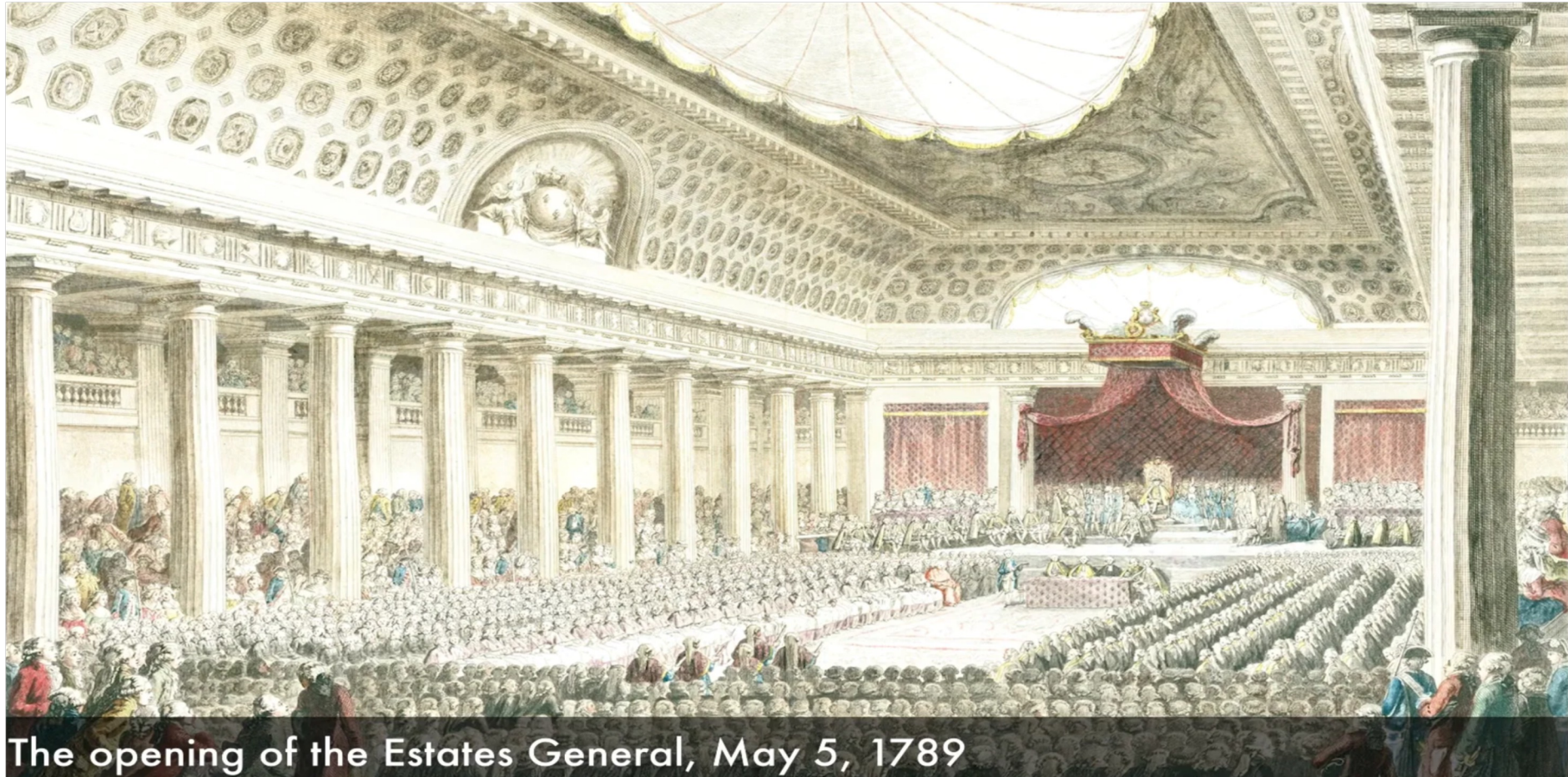
D. Merits & Demerits of the National Assembly

- Estates General-Necker

Higher Clergy	300
Higher Nobility	300
Commoners	300

- **5<sup>th</sup> May 1789-3 demands**

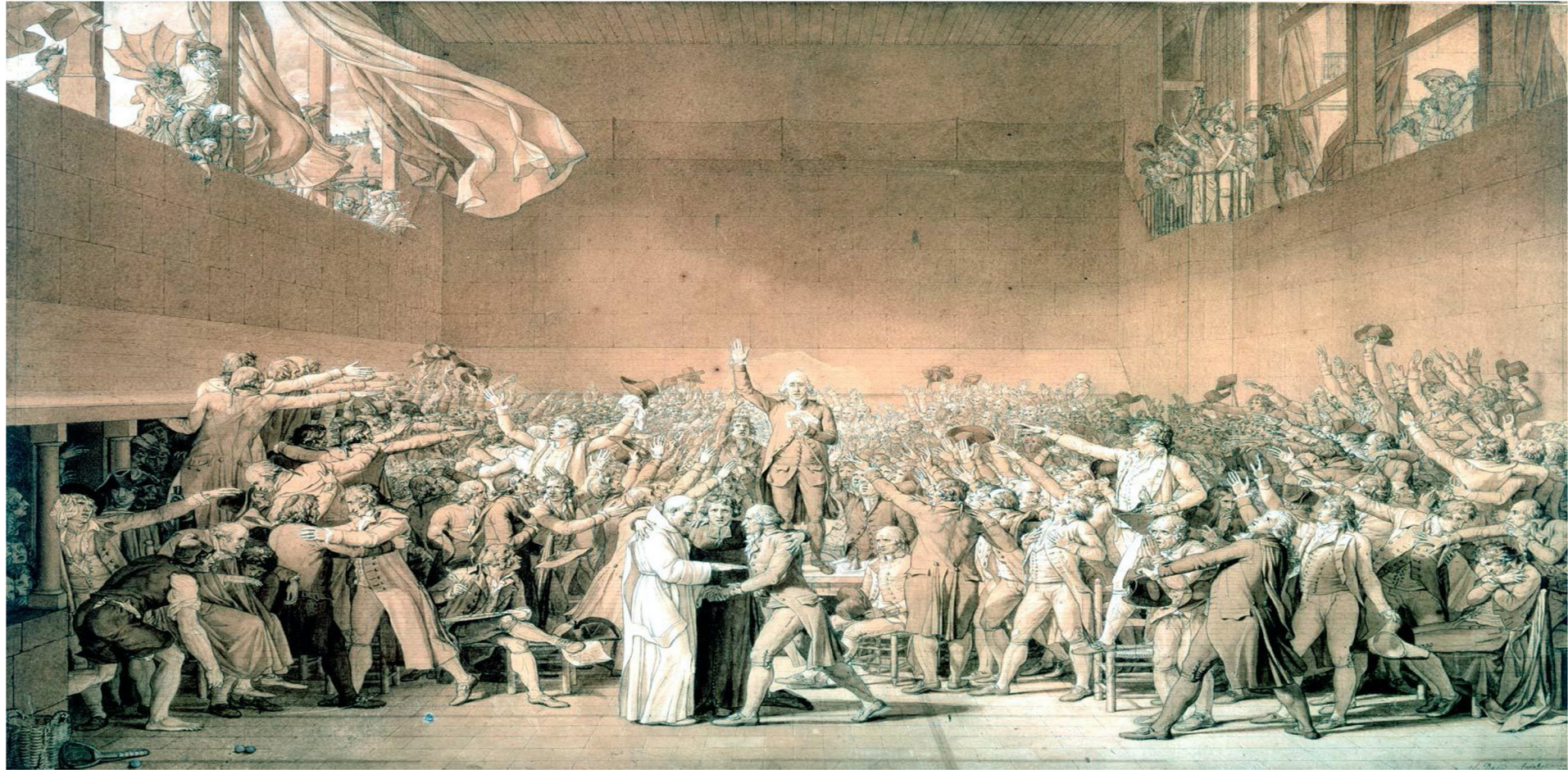
# Estates General



The opening of the Estates General, May 5, 1789



# Tennis Court Oath, Versailles





# Fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789)



## ❑ Fall of the Bastille-Impact

- i. Triumph of liberty
- ii. Municipal Govt in Paris
- iii. National Guard
- iv. Peasant revolt
- v. Nobles gave up feudal rights/privileges
- vi. Sale/purchase of offices
- vii. Class distinctions-Principle of equality



# National Assembly: 1789-1791



## □ Constitution of 1791

1. Feudalism, Serfdom, class distinctions and privileges
2. Taxes in proportion to revenues; public expenses borne by all; clergy-tithes, nobles-medieval rights
3. Sale of offices abolished
4. Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

## ❑ Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen:

- i. Men are born free, remain free and are equal in rights
- ii. Every political institution should protect the rights of man. These are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression
- iii. Free communication of thought and opinion is one of the most precious rights of man.
- iv. No person should be accused, arrested or imprisoned arbitrarily.
- v. No one shall be deprived of his right over his property except in the case of public need. Even then adequate compensation shall be paid to the owner.
- vi. Sovereignty resides in the nation and hence nobody can take the power into his hands and act.

- vii. Law is the expression of the general will. Hence all citizens have the right to take part personally or through their representatives in its formation.
- viii. The people have the right to control the finances of the country.
- ix. All the officials of the state shall be responsible to the people and to the country.

☐ Most remarkable event in the history of growth of democratic and republican ideas in France & Europe

☐ Prof.Thomson- 'Europe since Napoleon'

"It (Declaration of the Rights of Man) was drawn up not for France alone, but for the benefit of men everywhere who wanted to be free and to rid themselves of comparable burdens of absolute monarchy and the feudal privileges".

- **Administration**

- Uniform administration
- 83 departments-size/population;rivers,mountains
- Dept-Canton-Commune:Elected
- Legislature:**Legislative Assembly-745**;active-dominated by middle class
- Executive:King-**suspensive veto**,assisted by ministers
- Judiciary-elected;2-4 yrs;jury system; **Nobility of the Robe**

- **Financial Measures:**

- **Assignats**

- **Religious Measures**

- i. Monasteries, religious communities suppressed

- ii. Religious toleration

- iii. Bishops reduced-elected/paid;pope nominal

- iv. Dec 1790: Civil Constitution of the Clergy**-Juring/Non-Juring clergy



## ▪ Merits

- i. Destroyed **monarchy**
- ii. Destroyed **Feudalism, Serfdom, forced labour**
- iii. Destroyed **old admn, new order-sovereign will & Separation of Powers**
- iv. Revolutionary changes in **judiciary and church**
- v. Most imp-**Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the citizen**

## ▪ Demerits:

- i. **Stopped short of full democracy-active/passive, monopoly of middle class**
- ii. No cooperation/coordination between **Executive and Legislature**
- iii. Led to **religious disorders and civil war**
- iv. **Assignats-Inflation**

## ▪ Limitations of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen:

- 1) The Declaration of Rights of Men (DOR) focussed only on the Rights of Man. The concept of **gender equality was absent**.
- 2) The Fundamental Rights (FR) **to property was pro-rich**. It was against the needs and aspirations of a vast majority of poor Frenchmen.
- 3) There was **no emphasis on the FR to vote**. (The declaration did not explain the manner in which the common will was to be ascertained to enact the law)
- 4) The concept of **equal protection of law was absent** (Because the concept of absolute equality in appointment under the state benefit only the rich and educated sections of the society)

# IIInd PERIOD:1792-95

## The National Convention

- **Factors for the rise of National Convention and its contribution: 1791-95**
- Work of Legislative Assembly
- Laws passed by the Legislative Assembly and voted by the King
- Attitude of European powers towards revolutionary France

# Legislative Assembly



```
graph TD; A[Legislative Assembly] --> B[Constitutionalists]; A --> C[Republicans]; C --> D["Jacobins  
(extreme)"]; C --> E["Girondists  
(moderates)"]
```

**Constitutionalists**

**Republicans**

**Jacobins**

(extreme)

**Girondists**

(moderates)

- **Oct 5-6,1789:Women's march on Versailles-Paris**
- **Laws passed by the Legislative Assembly and voted by the King**
  - Civil Constitution of the Clergy**
  - Law of Emigres**
- **King's refuge in the Legislative Assembly**



# Women's march on Versailles, (5-6 October 1789)

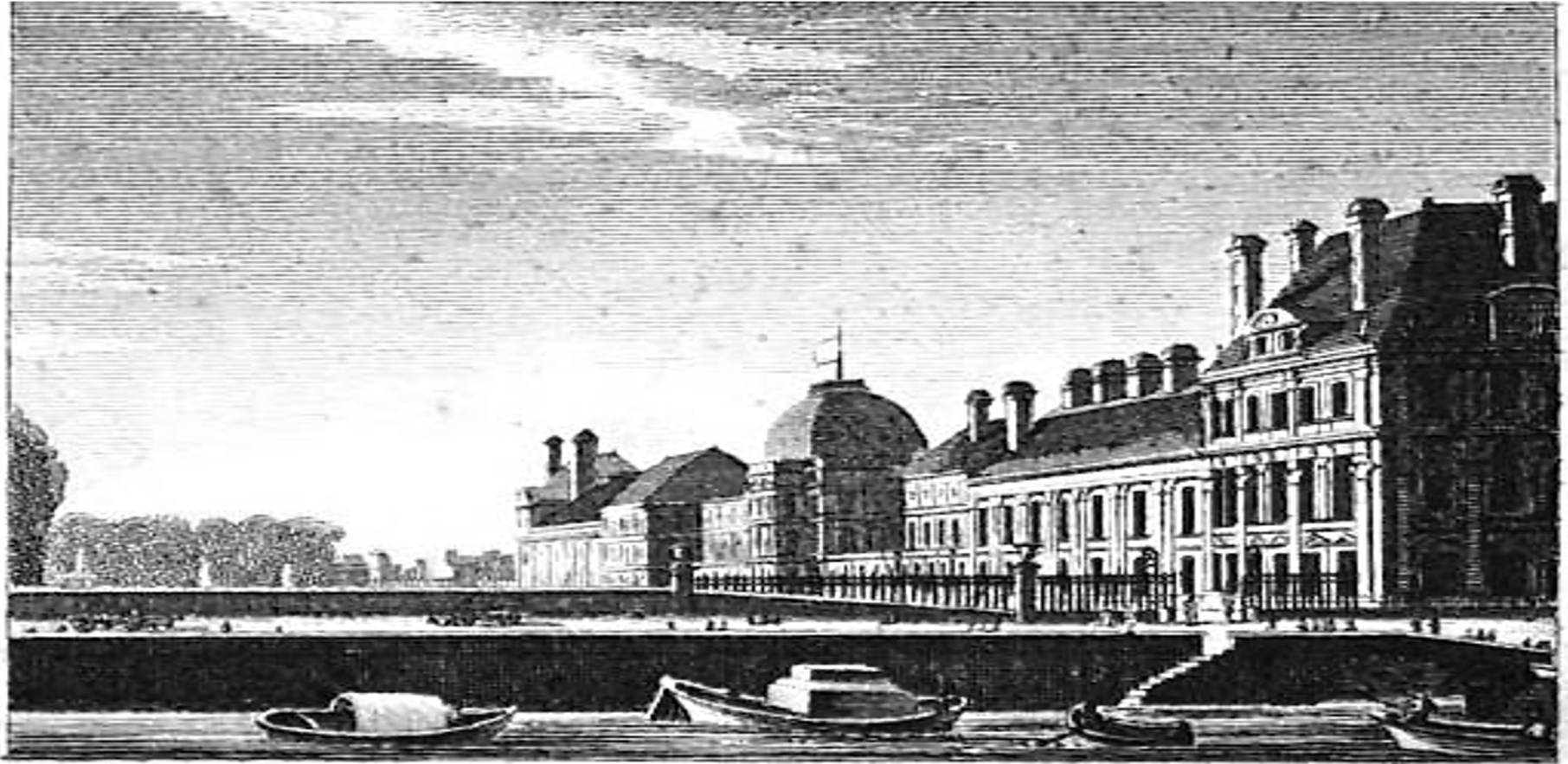




# Palace of Versailles



# Tuileries Palace-Paris



Durau sc.



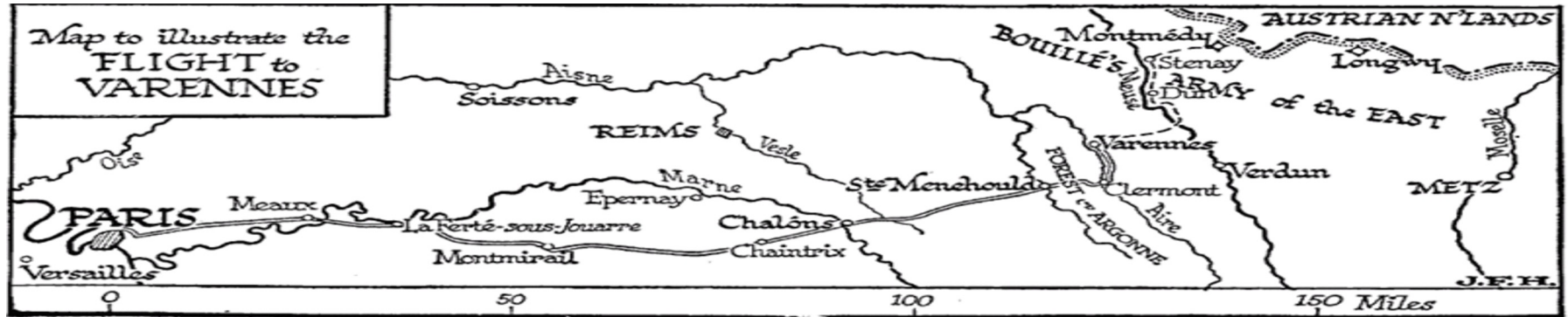
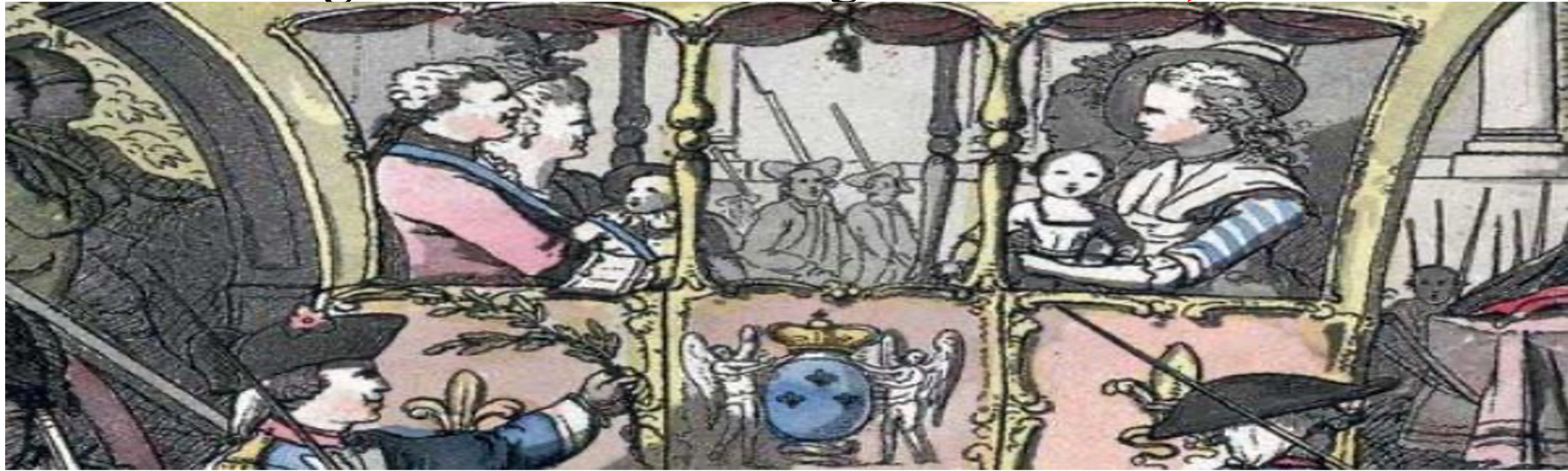
- **Night of June 21,1791:Attempted flight of the King**
- **Attitude of European powers towards revolutionary France**
- **Austria-Prussia V/s France**

Duke of Brunswick's declaration

Paris revolt-Dictatorship of Danton (Paris Commune established)

Battle of Valmy

# The Flight to Varennes-Night of June 21, 1791





# Arrest of the Royal Family



**LOUIS XVI STOPPED IN HIS FLIGHT AT VARENNES.**

*The soldiers on being informed that the monarch was, would be flying, surrounded the party and seized the king. The king immediately would have killed the soldiers that seized him, but the king's unwillingness to do the same of himself, yielded him up without resistance.*

**ARRESTATION OF THE ROY LOUIS XVI AT VARENNES.**

*The soldiers on being informed that the monarch was, would be flying, surrounded the party and seized the king. The king immediately would have killed the soldiers that seized him, but the king's unwillingness to do the same of himself, yielded him up without resistance.*



# Battle of Valmy, France-20 Sept, 1792



# National Convention



# NATIONAL CONVENTION:1792-95

- “ Perhaps no legislative body in the history had been called upon to solve such knotty problems as those which confronted the National Convention at the beginning of its session.”-Prof Hayes
- “ **Gentlemen I am innocent for that of which I am accused. May my blood assure the happiness of the French**“ –  
**21-1-1793**



# Louis XVI Guillotined



- The **Jacobins** dominated the National Convention (They were also called the **Mountainists or Montagnards** because they occupied a mountain of high seats in the National Convention)
- **Internal and external impact of the execution of the king**
  - **Internal:** Civil disorder, Jacobins-murderers
  - **External:**

**Austria, Prussia, England, Spain, Sardinia & Holland**

**V/s**

**France**



# The Reign of Terror

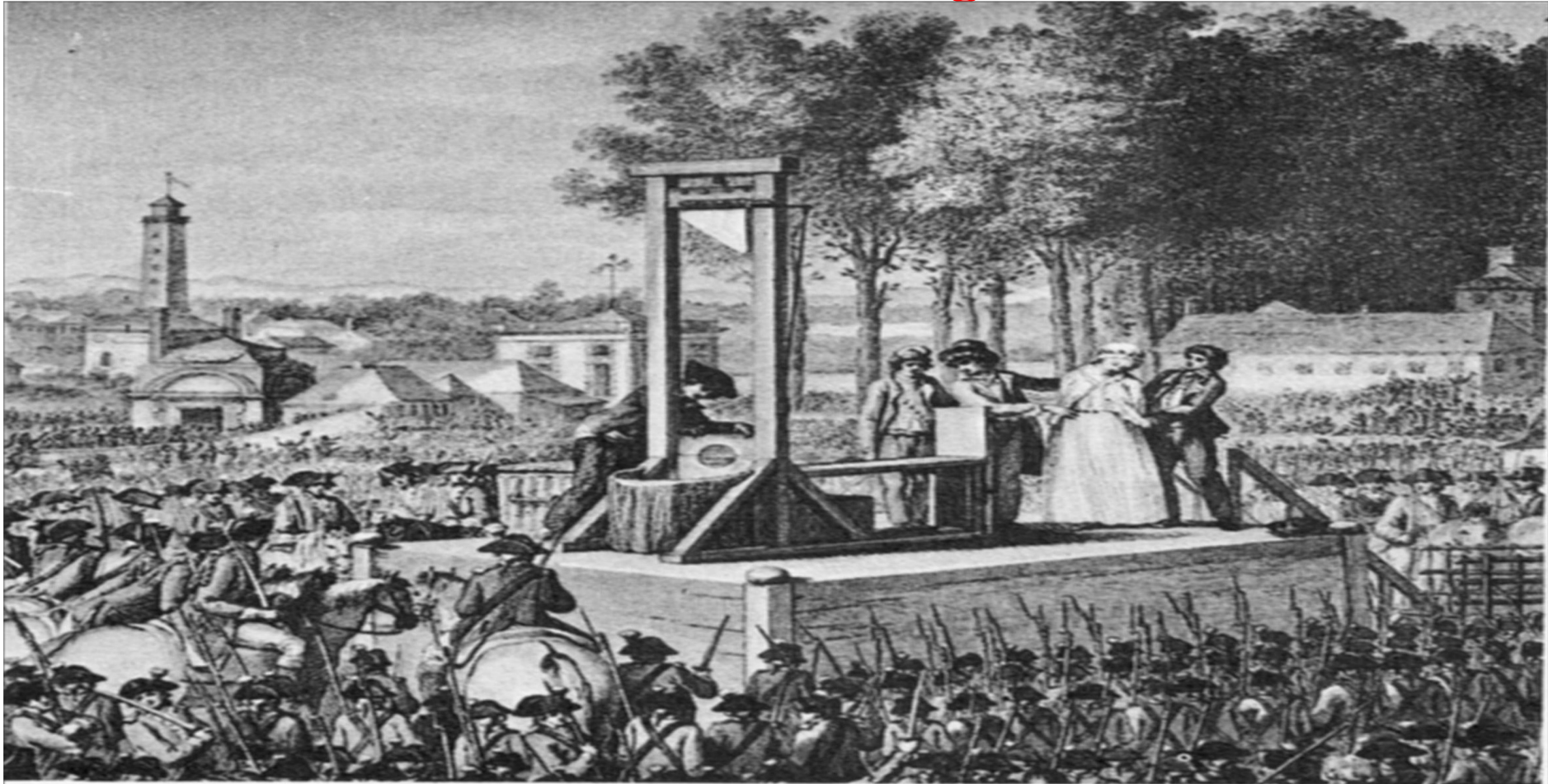


## ▪ **Reign of Terror:**

○ Danton, Marat, Robespierre, Snt. Just etc

- i. Committee of Public Safety**
- ii. The Law of Suspects**
- iii. Revolutionary Tribunal**
- iv. The Square of the Revolution**

# Marie Antoinette to be guillotined





# The Royal family



- **1793:Conscription**;18-25;770,000 soldiers
  - Spain, Prussia-defeated
  - William V of Holland-deposed,Republic of Batavia
  - Sardinia withdrew
  - Only **England & Austria** remained to be tackled
  - France-Peaceful internally and externally



## □ Work of the National Convention

1. Abolition of monarchy; **First French Republic-Sept 21, 1792**
2. Conscription > **'Nation in Arms'**

“The young men shall go to the people, the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions, the women shall make tents and clothing and shall serve in the hospitals, the children shall turn linen into lint, the aged shall betake themselves to the public places in order to rouse the courage of the warriors”.
3. National language, National calendar; **Year-Sept 21**

#### 4. Codification of laws:

- i. No imprisonment for debt
- ii. Slavery abolished in French colonies
- iii. Women-property right
- iv. Law of primogeniture
- v. Metric system
- vi. Christianity restored, toleration

#### 5. Social reforms:

- a. Property of emigres confiscated
- b. Wealthy, clergy, nobles suspects
- c. Peasant proprietors
- d. Laws of the Maximum
- e. 'Citizen'
- f. Rationing

## 5. **Constitution of 1795**

- Republican fabric; dominance of propertied classes
- **2 Chambers:** examine and enact laws
  - i. Upper House(Council of Ancients)-500 members
  - ii. Lower House-500 members
- **Executive: Directory(5)**
  - Directors elected by legislature; **appointed ministers of state** who were to supervise enforcement of laws
  - **Dictatorial powers**

## □ Why the revolution broke out in France ?

- i. Nature of French feudalism  
**Cardinal Richelieu-Louis XIII**
- ii. Enlightened middle class
- iii. Economic Crisis
- iv. Revolutionary atmosphere

# ACHIEVEMENTS-FRENCH REVOLUTION

## ■ INTERNAL

- i. Feudalism, Serfdom was abolished
- ii. All privileges whether based on birth or wealth came to an end.
- iii. Monarchy ended and people became supreme.
- iv. In the economic sphere-guild monopoly was smashed, free trade introduced, Right to private property was recognized.
- v. A new France was born-no more scarcity; the farmer owned the land which he had secured from the nobles, eat his fill and dared to speak out.



## vi. Administration:

- a) Selection and nomination was replaced by **election**
- b) **Uniformity in administration**
- c) **Sale of offices was abolished**
- d) Spread the **sentiment of nationalism**; **National calendar**;  
**French-national language**; Provinces were named after **rivers and mountains**
- e) Idea of “**the Nation in Arms**” was born
- f) ‘Loyalty to the king’ was replaced by ‘**Loyalty to the nation**’

## EXTERNAL

- - i. Feudalism abolished in France; **feudal institutions** all over **Europe disappeared**.
  - ii. Establishment of **Liberty and equality** first in France and then in the whole of Europe.
  - iii. **Social equality** and **individual freedom** were held precious
  - iv. Political power shifted from **nobility to the middle class**
    - Eg: In England political power shifted from the aristocracy-middle class. Example of middle class-peasants and workers fought for franchise not only in France/Europe
  - v. It shook the **control of the Church** over the people.
    - **Reason** but not faith, **philosophy** but not theology became the guides in all social and political activities.

## vi. Growth of **Humanitarianism** and humanitarian movements

- Individual treated as an end and life as the greatest of values
- All round interest/desire to promote material and moral well being of people

- a) Movements to **abolish slavery**
- b) Movements for **prohibition of child labour**
- c) Movements for **reform of prisoners** all over the world
- d) **Methodist** Movement in England

## vii. Rise and growth of the **sentiment of nationalism**

- Abolition of feudalism led to unity and solidarity and growth of **national spirit**

viii. French Revolution led to

- a) Aspirations of **Germans and Italians** for national unity
- b) **Balkans** became a scene of national revolutions
- c) **Spanish & Portuguese revolutions**-overthrow monarchy
- d) **Home Rule Movement** in Ireland got sympathy
- e) National movements in **Egypt, Indonesia, Indo-China, Latin America, India and Boer wars in South Africa**

ix. Gave further boost to **Constitutionalism**

- Doctrine of **Divine Right of Kings & Benevolent Despotism** received setback
- **Popular Sovereignty**
- **Nation more important than King**
- Overthrew autocracies and demanded **Constitutions** guaranteeing their **rights & liberties**.



- x. Confiscation of Church property by the government weakened the idea of sanctity of property. As a result **Socialism became a political programme** and ceased to be merely a speculative doctrine.

